

Northbrook, IL - Joined by teachers, school superintendents and local education leaders, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk announced bipartisan legislation he introduced with U.S. Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ) to make significant reforms to the current federal education law.

Endorsed by the National Education Association (NEA), the *Education Assessment Technical Corrections Act* (H.R. 5717) makes significant improvements for parents and teachers to effectively assess education achievement using lessons learned over the past four years.

Working with his Education Advisory Board, Kirk crafted the legislation to reform the ‘Highly Qualified Teacher’ and ‘Adequate Yearly Progress’ Provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act. The reforms give school districts in “hard-to-staff” areas extended time to find highly-qualified teachers.

“Our children deserve the best schools and teachers that our communities can provide. Unfortunately, some schools are having trouble meeting state and federal teacher requirements in certain hard-to-staff communities,” said Kirk. “Schools in hard-to-staff areas should be granted extra time from the federal government in the form of a two year extension. If schools demonstrate they are working toward recruiting highly qualified teachers, they should have this extension.”

Kirk’s reforms also call for more flexible assessments of the Adequate Yearly Progress provision to focus more on individual student progress from year to year rather than comparing different classes. Current federal law does not measure individual student improvements, but rather counts students under sub-groups -- sometimes resulting in only one student having difficulty triggering a school’s “failing” grade across multiple sub-groups that only contained the same student.

The bill also resolves differences between federal laws governing education assessment and special education. Many times, state or federal assessment rules conflict with requirements in another federal law – the *Individuals with Disabilities Act*, H.R. 5717 removes these problems by ensuring that students are compared for consecutive years rather than across classes for the same school year.

The bill would also place equal weight on each student, and clarifies the primacy of federally-mandated Individualized Education Program that governs a special education child’s progress.

Kirk's legislation comes as children are preparing for another school year. Congress will formally review state and federal education assessment programs next year.

This bill – given its technical expertise and bipartisan support from the NEA – provides a firm foundation for improvements in the way we measure successful and failing schools.

“We have learned more about assessing school performance over the last four years than the previous 14. We can now apply the considered data and peer reviewed judgment of education experts to ensure our assessments accurately tell parents how their child is doing and how their school is performing,” said Kirk. “The *Education Assessment Technical Corrections Act* represents a strong bipartisan consensus, backed by school management and unions, to make the job of promoting outstanding teachers and schools more accurate.”

Kirk's legislation resulted from the research and education expertise of his Education Advisory Board Chairman, Dr. Paul Kimmelman, who joined Kirk at his press conference. Also attending were Roycealee Wood, Regional Superintendent of Schools, Carolyn Krause, State Representative, Susan Gravenhorst, Lake County Board, Steve Cordogan, Director of Research and Evaluation for Township High School District 214, , Andrew Coneen, Stevenson High School teacher and Dan Larsen, Stevenson High School teacher.

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